

# Membership MATTERS



## Steps to Restoring Power

Whether we're building a new substation, replacing aging power poles, or trimming trees too close to power lines, Blue Ridge Electric works every day to keep your power reliable. Yet, no matter how well we maintain our electric infrastructure, severe weather sometimes harms our system, leading to power outages for members.

The major cause of outages is damage from fallen trees. That's why we have an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program to protect over 7,000 miles of power lines serving the cooperative's 73,000 members.

Restoring power after a major outage involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line. The main goal is to restore power safely — for members and linemen — in the shortest amount of time possible.

Even before an outage occurs, Blue Ridge Electric employees are prepared with a plan of action. Our plan for quick, safe power restoration includes:

**Step 1:** Transmission structures and lines that supply power to one or more transmission substations are restored first. These main delivery lines receive first priority because they serve tens of thousands of people.

**Step 2:** Restored next are distribution substations, which “step down” or reduce voltage from transmission lines so it can be distributed to thousands of members.

**Step 3:** Main distribution supply lines are restored next if the problem cannot be found at earlier check points. These are the lines on power poles along roads.

**Step 4:** The final power supply lines, called “tap lines,” are restored next if needed. These lines “tap off” the main distribution lines.

**Step 5:** Damage can also occur on the service line leading from the transformer pole into your home. This can explain why your neighbors have power and you don't.

**The fastest way to report an outage is by calling our automated PowerLine® at 1-800-448-2383.**

**Always stay away from downed power lines and call Blue Ridge Electric to report them.**

# THE *Perspective*

## Subsidiary Update

As a member-owner of Blue Ridge Electric, you are also an owner of the cooperative's propane and heating fuels subsidiary, Blue Ridge Energies, LLC. Through this column, I periodically share updates about your subsidiary which offers propane, heating fuels, gas logs and other hearth products to residential and commercial customers in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe, Alleghany, Avery, and Catawba counties.

Blue Ridge Energies is not only a source of jobs for local residents; it also provides a necessary service and line of products in our communities.

As the subsidiary of a member-owned organization, one of the accomplishments at Blue Ridge Energies which I am most pleased to share is in the area of customer service. Our Blue Ridge Energies employees consistently earn customer satisfaction ratings of 9.6 on a 10-point scale for the service they provide.

Providing value in today's economy is important for any business. Blue Ridge Energies strives to help customers control costs by first offering competitive prices, but also by offering savings programs such as Refer a Friend, budget billing and senior citizens programs.

One of the most important aspects of your subsidiary is the direct benefit it provides by offsetting some of the operating costs of the cooperative. This is accomplished through Blue Ridge Energies paying for any services it utilizes from Blue Ridge Electric. For example, the subsidiary pays for the space it leases for its showrooms in the cooperative's district offices. Blue Ridge Energies also pays its portion of the use of certain employees from the cooperative, such as for human resources and safety services.

In 2008, the subsidiary's financial benefit to the cooperative through cost-sharing and net income was \$1,347,000. This helps the cooperative operate more efficiently and is a direct cost benefit to members. Energies has also been able to fund its annual growth rate without any long term debt.

Each year for the past two years, Blue Ridge Electric has contributed \$25,000 of the Energies earnings to the Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation. Funds from the Members Foundation are distributed through local helping agencies to assist members in need of crisis assistance to help pay their heating bills. Foundation funds are also awarded in the form of grants to non profit agencies and programs that contribute to improving the quality of life in the cooperative's service area.

We were pleased to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Blue Ridge Energies last year. In 1998, the company was created to help meet the heating fuels needs of northwest North Carolina, to add operating efficiencies for the cooperative, and to benefit the members of our cooperative. I'm proud to say that today the employees at Blue Ridge Energies are doing an outstanding job in achieving our Energies vision and the future looks bright for our subsidiary!

An Editorial by  
Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



## Energy Legislation Update

While progress on the federal energy bill slowed down this summer as Congress took up health care reform, as this newsletter goes to press the Senate appears to be moving again on the American Clean Energy Leadership Act (ACELA).

We continue to monitor this legislation, which, as it's currently written, includes a cap-and-trade component that would significantly increase consumer electricity costs in North Carolina and other parts of the country.

We believe Congress can find a balanced solution that will protect consumer costs while also taking care of the environment. Please help us voice this need by contacting your representatives at [FindABalancedSolution.com](http://FindABalancedSolution.com).

  
Find A  
Balanced  
Solution

## More News

### Scam Artists Targeting Utility Customers

Blue Ridge Electric wants to make its members aware of scam artists who appear to be targeting utility customers across the country.

A commonly reported scenario is for a scam artist who is looking to steal credit card information to call posing as a utility representative and demand immediate payment by credit card to avoid disconnection of service.

To help our members protect themselves from fraud, Blue Ridge Electric urges members to use extra caution if asked for personal information or access to their home.

If approached or contacted by someone claiming to be a Blue Ridge Electric employee, we recommend the following safety tips:

1. Always ask for company identification. All Blue Ridge Electric employees are issued photo identification cards and are more than willing to provide this information.
2. Take note of the vehicle the person is driving. All Blue Ridge line technicians, staking engineers, field service technicians and other operations employees drive Blue Ridge fleet vehicles that are clearly marked with the cooperative's logo. Cooperative contractors are issued Blue Ridge Electric identification for their vehicles as well.
3. If you are not certain a telephone call is coming from Blue Ridge Electric, DO NOT provide any personal or banking information. Blue Ridge Electric recommends that you ask the caller to provide their employee number and contact information. Again, if you're uncertain about the call, simply hang up and call Blue Ridge Electric at any local district office (listed on the back of this newsletter).
4. Blue Ridge Electric employees may, on occasion, be dispatched to a member's home for unscheduled routine maintenance. If a visitor or caller is unable or unwilling to provide their name and employee identification card, please call Blue Ridge Electric at any of our local district office numbers or toll free at 1-800-451-5474 and report it to local law enforcement authorities.



### New Technology Being Installed in Ashe County

Specialized Technical Services (Team STS), a contractor for Blue Ridge Electric, is currently installing automated "smart" meters in the cooperative's Ashe County service area.

The automated metering infrastructure (AMI) being installed across the Blue Ridge Electric system holds many benefits for both members and the cooperative. In addition to providing a powerful tool that helps the cooperative even further improve and monitor the reliable flow of electricity to members, AMI brings the latest technology to automated metering and the electric system as a whole. With AMI, energy usage is communicated over the power lines to the cooperative with precise accuracy. This will eventually offer members detailed information about their home or business energy usage, which could be used to help better control energy costs and improve efficiency.

Visit [BlueRidgeEMC.com](http://BlueRidgeEMC.com) for more details about AMI, or contact your local district office.

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## Members Only NEWS For Members of Blue Ridge Electric

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Wilkes	(800) 451-5474
PowerLine®	(800) 448-2383

(PowerLine® is an automated account information and outage reporting system.)

Toll Free 1 (800) 451-5474  
(for members outside the service area)

To report an outage at any time,  
call one of the numbers listed above.

**OFFICE HOURS**  
8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday  
Night deposit available.

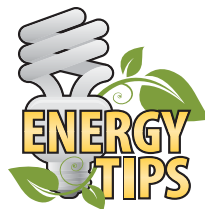
Visit us on the Web:  
[www.BlueRidgeEMC.com](http://www.BlueRidgeEMC.com)

## Your Input Counts!





At Blue Ridge Electric, we're working to earn a "10" from you on customer satisfaction — the highest rating possible on our satisfaction survey. More importantly, we constantly strive to provide you with a level of customer service that is second to none. That's why your input on our customer service surveys is so important — it helps us continually improve to meet your expectations.

A professional research firm administers our survey so that the results are accurate and fair. They typically call between 5 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., and the survey lasts about 15 minutes.

If you get a call, please take a few minutes to share your thoughts. We appreciate the input and it helps us serve you even better in the future!



## Water Heating Energy Savings Tips:

-  Lower water heating costs by using low-flow shower heads and swivel faucet aerators.
-  Lower the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees. (Always make sure the power is turned off at the water heater before adjusting.)
-  When you will be away from home for several days, consider turning the water heater off at the electrical breaker box. It only takes about an hour to reheat once you return.
-  Finally, visit any Blue Ridge Electric district office and purchase an Energy Savers Water Heater kit for \$14. The kit includes: one water heater blanket and six feet of pipe insulation; two low-flow bathroom faucet aerators; one low-flow Earth Massage showerhead; and one low-flow kitchen faucet aerator. (Contents of this kit are a \$50 value.)

Visit [BlueRidgeEMC.com/GreenSmart](http://BlueRidgeEMC.com/GreenSmart) for more energy saving information.